

JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER
3RD DISTRICT, SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION
AND RELATED AGENCIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
U.S. JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1602

□ 2352 RAYBURN HOB
WASHINGTON D.C. 20515
(202) 225-3536

□ GENERAL O.O. HOWARD HOUSE
750 ANDERSON STREET, SUITE B
VANCOUVER, WA 98661
(360) 695-6292

WWW.JHB.HOUSE.GOV

January 5, 2021

The Honorable Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

I am requesting that you take decisive action to support and assist the most vulnerable and disadvantaged students in Washington state who are at risk of severe learning loss due to extensive school closures.

On December 27, the president signed into law a COVID aid package I helped shape that is delivering \$54 billion to states to assist pre-K-12 students during this ongoing health crisis. Additionally, I helped secure \$745 million for Community Service Block Grants in the recent appropriations omnibus bill. Public schools play a central role in educating our students, yet many remain closed in communities throughout Washington. Where in-person public learning is inaccessible, we should provide vulnerable students with access to every available tool including allowing them to use funds from the Community Service Block Grants for private school tuition and other in-person options to safeguard their learning and personal welfare during this crisis.

The closure of schools has a disproportionate impact on students living in poverty. A recent report found that between 15 million and 16 million public school students live in a household that lacks internet connectivity and/ or an adequate device for distance learning.¹ As schools remain closed, the impending learning loss for these students is alarming as they fall further behind. Low-income students are estimated to lose over a year of learning due to the current school closures, which is expected to exacerbate current achievement gaps by 15-20 percent.² This is more clearly demonstrated by the fact that 41 percent of low-income parents expressed concerns that their child will fall behind in school due to coronavirus learning disruptions.³ School closures could also lead to increased high school dropout rates for vulnerable students who do not have access to high quality virtual education or access to in-person support.

Additionally, educators are some of the most critical individuals to observe and report child neglect and abuse – something that is made nearly impossible without in-person interaction. The

¹ Boston Consulting Group in partnership with Common Sense. “[Closing the K-12 Digital Divide in the Age of Distance Learning](#).”

² McKinsey & Company, “[COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime](#).”

³ Pew Research Center, “[Lower-income parents most concerned about their children falling behind amid COVID-19 school closures](#).”

2018 HHS report on child maltreatment found that educators are responsible for reporting close to 21% of child neglect and abuse cases.⁴ Even more disturbing, a recent report found that in New York more than 250,000 cases of child abuse or neglect may have gone underreported due to current COVID restrictions.⁵ A recent CDC report found that despite a decrease in emergency department visits for child neglect and abuse that the percentage of hospitalizations increased compared to 2019.⁶

Teachers and support staff have been appropriately included in recommendations by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices in its category of non-health care essential workers to be included in the next groups to receive the vaccination in phase 1B⁷, yet vaccinating every teacher will take additional time. We cannot delay addressing the disproportionate impact of school closures on our most vulnerable students.

Therefore, I request that you immediately expand the use of Community Service Block Grant funds appropriated by Congress to be used to provide critical scholarships for disadvantaged students to access in-person learning. A recent presidential Executive Order expanded the use of Community Service Block Grants funds to provide scholarships to families whose children cannot access in-person learning. States and eligible entities are now permitted to use CSBG funds to provide scholarships to pay for private school tuition, home schooling, micro schooling, learning-pod expenses, special education services, or tutoring.⁸

Additionally, please heed the recommendation by CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices to vaccinate teachers and support staff in the next phase. I know the decision to keep schools closed was not made lightly, but the evidence continues to mount that the longer we deprive vulnerable students from in-person learning, the more we jeopardize their ability to live healthy and productive lives.

Thank you for your time and attention to this pressing issue. I look forward to your response and to continue working together to address issues for both students and teachers in the future.

Sincerely,



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress

⁴ Children's Bureau (Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [Child Maltreatment Report 2018](#)

⁵ Reporting of child maltreatment during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in New York City from March to May 2020. [Elsevier, Science Direct](#).

⁶ Swedo E, Idaikkadar N, Leemis R, et al. Trends in U.S. Emergency Department Visits Related to Suspected or Confirmed Child Abuse and Neglect Among Children and Adolescents Aged <18 Years Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, January 2019–September 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2020;69: 1841–1847.

⁷ Dooling K, Marin M, Wallace M, et al. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Updated Interim Recommendation for Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine — United States, December 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2021; 69:1657-1660.

⁸ Executive Order, "President Donald J. Trump Is Expanding Educational Opportunity For America's Children And Families Impacted By The Pandemic." [Summary](#).